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ABSTRACT

Role definition has historically been a problem for the school counselor. It seems critical that role definitions continue to be developed, measured, and disseminated. This study is concerned with an initial psychometric analysis of an instrument, The Counselor Role Inventory (CRI). The CRI contains 20 questions on a 5-point Likert-type scale. The instrument was designed utilizing the role statement of the American School Counselor Association, current theory in guidance and counseling, and relevant research results. The instrument contains five variables: (1) prevention; (2) remediation; (3) commitment; (4) sub-professional duties; and (5) perceived effectiveness. Instruments were mailed to 214 counselors in a 3-state area in schools containing 1 counselor who reported to a respective principal. The entire return was 154 surveys. For each item, respondents answered three times, forming three scales. The first measured whether the function was perceived as part of the ideal role of the school counselor, the second if it was typical of the present role as a school counselor, and the third pertained to the perception of how the building principal perceives the role. The instrument provides a degree of complexity, is exploratory, and as such is still in a preliminary stage of establishing reliability and validity. Counselors in this study seemed to identify a broad based ideal role based on prevention, remediation, and commitment functions that do not include sub-professional duties. (LLL)

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Role Perceptions of the Rural School Counselor: A Factor Analysis

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Role Perceptions of the Rural School Counselor: A Factor Analysis

Role definition has historically been a problem for the school counselor . The difficulty of this definition has been well documented throughout the history of school counseling. Carlson (1991) stated that counselors still find themselves fighting to keep existing positions and that counselors have not done an adequate job of communicating their role . A national survey of secondary guidance leaders (Meyr, 1992) found that the role of the secondary counselor had changed, becoming more complex but with fewer personnel. At the building level, principals are important counselor role determinants. Salmon (1985) stated that the counselor's role became that assigned by the principal which reflected his/her goals and administrative orientation. It seems critical that role definitions continue to be developed, measured, and disseminated. This study is concerned with an initial psychometric analysis of an instrument, *The Counselor Role Inventory (CRI).*

Research concerning the role of the school counselor can be summarized by the following statement. Baker (1981) stated that counselors defined their role in terms of the functions they performed, there was variation in these functions, and counselors had been encouraged over the years to consider several different primary roles. Wilgus and Shelley (1988) noted that researchers have suggested repeatedly that counselors examine the correlation between their programs, what they actually do, and how educators and others view the evolving role of the counselor.

Early studies (Hitchcock, 1953; Purcell, 1957, Tennyson, 1958) were illustrative of these remarks. Hitchcock was concerned that large percentages of counselors did not consider such recognized functions as occupational planning, referral, case conferencing, serving on curriculum planning committees, or counseling with parents a part of their role. Purcell noted that counselors were spending significant amounts of time scheduling students into classes and recording test scores with little

time spent on group guidance or case conferencing. Tennyson found that administrators were making somewhat greater use of counselors' services.

School counselors have considered the school principal as a primary role determinant (Herr & Cramer, 1965). Knowles and Shertzer (1965) found that school administrators favored a broad definition of the counselors' role emphasizing a somewhat authoritarian, institution-centered, part-time counselor with an educational viewpoint stressing information-giving functions.

More recent research (Bonebrake & Borgers, 1984; Frank, 1986; Remley & Albright, 1988; Schmidt, 1986) has uncovered similar themes. Frank found counselors and principals to have considerable distance between perceived actual and perceived ideal role. Schmidt found significant differences between counselors and principals at the elementary level on 31 of 32 items. The other researchers found that some principals seemed to view counselors as administrative assistants for functions such as bus and cafeteria duty, while others expressed support for the counselor to perform more counseling functions.

Helms and Ibrahim (1985) identified, through principal components analysis, six major components of the counselor's role. Counselors, students, and parents were included in the sample. The components identified were public relations, personal and educational counseling, job placement, career development, parent/child counseling, and vocational/career counseling. The researchers concluded that counselors in school systems needed to seek input from constituents as to high-priority functions.

There has been recent interest in the unique setting of the rural school counselor (Sutton, 1988; Sutton & Southworth, 1990; McIntire, Marion, & Quaglia, 1990). School counselors are often the only counseling professionals working in the schools. Wasson and Strowig (1965) initially reported on the factor of isolation and counselor role. Their study indicated that professionally isolated counselors tended to use teachers and administrators as reference groups while those from larger schools used such

groups to a lesser extent. Counselor training may serve to reinforce this isolation. Wellington (1974) stated that typically counselors are trained to model behavior in isolation, to emphasize therapy rather than prevention, to function in an environment separate from that of their clients, and to operate without an understanding the goals of the institution. Continuing this theme, Matthes (1987) noted that changes resulting from preparation as a counselor are negated after a year and the "new" rural counselor adopts teachers and administrators as the primary professional reference.

Method

Instrument

The *CRI* contains 20 questions on a five-point Likert-type scale. The instrument was designed utilizing the role statement of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA Governing Board, 1981), current theory in guidance and counseling and relevant research results. The instrument contains five variables: (a) prevention, (b) remediation, (C) commitment, (d) sub-professional duties, and (e) perceived effectiveness. For each item the respondent will answer three times (forming three scales). The first if the function is perceived as part of the *ideal* role of the school counselor. The second if this is *typical* of the present role as a school counselor and the third to the *perception* of how the building principal perceives the role. The *CRI* is located in Appendix A.

Prevention (items 1,2,5,8,) is the focus of the counselor to assist students with developmental concerns. Students are helped to improve personal relationships and to engage in personal planning and decision making. The counselor's clientele is composed of all students. Remediation (items 3,4,6,7,) is the identification, diagnosis, and remediation of individual students' difficulties or problems. Professional commitment (items 9,10,12,15,16) is a generalized set of practices which bind the counselor as a school-based practitioner in professional relationships with students, parents, teachers, administrators, the community and the profession. Duties of a semi-clerical

or quasi-professional nature such as routine documentation, substitute teaching form the sub-professional duties variable (11,14,13). Effectiveness was defined as proficiency in producing a desired outcome (items 1,2,3,4). counselors also responded to their perception of how the principal would perceive their effectiveness.

Participants

Instruments were mailed to 214 counselors in a three state area in schools containing one counselor who reported to a respective principal. The entire return was 154 total surveys resulting in a return rate of 71.9%. Due to the rural nature of the sample, many schools were reported as being K-12 or unusual configurations such as, for example grades 4 through 7, the participants were distributed roughly equally over elementary, middle, and secondary levels. Average number of students was 280. The study included 87 women and 60 men with 7 not answering the demographic portion of the study. Mean age was 42 with 17.6 years of experience in education.

Factor analysis

The 56 total items were factored by the principal components method utilizing a varimax rotation (Kim & Mueller, 1989). Tinsley and Tinsley (1987) provided a discussion of principal components analysis as an appropriate exploratory-descriptive method. Utilizing a scree diagram and eigenvalues above 1.0 and factor loadings above .50 , five principal components were identified. These components accounted for 48.1% of the total variance. The factor loading matrix is presented in Table 1.

(Insert Table 1 here)

Factor 1 ("Institution Based Role") had an eigenvalue of 11.94 and accounted for 21.3% of the variance. Twelve items loaded above .50 on this factor. Most items (8 of 12) related to the counselor's perception of how their building principal perceived their role as counselor. This factor seemed to emphasize a role based on prevention and commitment functions of the counselor. Sub-professional items did not load on this factor nor did items related to providing individual counseling and confidentiality.

Factor 2 ("Ideal Role") had an eigenvalue of 4.98 with 8.9% of the variance. High loadings were evident on all items of the ideal scale with the exception of items 11, 13 and 14 which focused on sub-professional duties. These items with the addition of the typical item relating to confidentiality formed this factor.

Factor 3 ("General Assistance") included 8 items from the typical scale and perceptions of the principal scales . The eigenvalue was 4.2 and accounted for 7.5% of the variance. This factor centered on being readily available to students, to provide assistance to administrators, and to provide assistance in recordkeeping and educational placements.

Factor 4 ("Effectiveness") included all the items generally defined as proficiency in producing a desired outcome. Eigenvalue was 3.13 with 5.6% of total variance. Factor 5 ("Sub-professional Duties") had an eigenvalue of 2.7 with 4.8% of the variance. This factor included the three responses to the question: "To provide assistance in areas such as student attendance, discipline, and substitute teaching as needed". This factor also contained a strong negative loading (-.53) on perceived principal's role of providing individual counseling for students.

Reliability

Chronbach's alpha for the entire CRI (56 items) was .92. As the factor analysis did not indicate clear loadings on the prevention, remediation, etc. variables it was decided to use Ideal, Typical, Perception , and Effectiveness as subscales. The coefficients were also encouraging. These were .85 (Ideal), .79 (Typical), .86 (Perception), and .81 (Effectiveness).

Discussion

Initial analyses of the *CRI* appear encouraging. The instrument provides a degree of complexity, is exploratory, and as such is still in a preliminary stage of establishing reliability and validity. However Cronbach's alpha coefficients were all above .75 with the coefficient for the entire instrument indicating a high level of internal consistency.

Five interpretable principal components were identified and of 56 total items, all but 7 items loaded on at least one factor at a value of .50 or higher. Additional data would be needed to support this structure (Tinsley & Tinsley, 1987)

Continuing research is vital concerning the role of the school counselor. Hackney (1991) noted that the 1960's led to drift from a preventive emphasis to remediation. As a result services drifted from a focus on all students to serving a few. Thus in times of budget cuts counselors may be seen as irrelevant. In rural areas counselors are often the only guidance professional in a school and work closely with principals. In isolated settings the influence of the principal may be particularly important in how the counselor interprets his or her role.

Counselors in this study seemed to identify a broad based ideal role based on prevention, remediation, and commitment functions that do not include sub-professional duties. An identification of any typical role seemed less clear. The additional factors of "Institution Based Role" and "General Assistance Role" seemed to provide a collection of items related to typical practice and to the counselor's perception of how the principal considered the role. In an earlier look at this data (Stickel, 1990) there was a high level of congruence between this perception of the principal's view and the counselor's report of what they typically did day to day. However, this perception was not congruent with what principals actually reported.

Development of an instrument to better measure the evolving role of the school counselor will be important in the continuation of research. The CRI appears to afford a promising degree of reliability. Further trials on larger and more diverse samples will be necessary to further support the implications of this exploratory and descriptive analysis.

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Table 1
CRI Factor Loading Matrix

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
1I	.03	.62	-.05	.08	-.10
2I	.15	.51	-.14	.07	.003
3I	.13	.65	.06	.15	.02
4I	.002	.73	.28	.06	-.16
5I	.14	.60	-.12	.13	.25
6I	.14	.57	.23	.15	.04
7I	.07	.65	-.10	.22	-.06
8I	.13	.59	-.32	.002	.10
9I	-.01	.60	.41	-.08	.08
10I	.08	.71	.30	.05	-.20
11I	.16	.00	.08	.17	.51
12I	-.01	.56	.41	.19	.07
13I	-.01	.29	.28	.19	.31
14I	-.03	.36	.36	.08	.16
15I	.10	.71	.22	.03	.08
16I	.09	.65	.00	-.13	.13
1T	.50	.10	-.13	.19	-.06
2T	.64	.08	-.06	.33	.04
3T	.51	.17	.09	.30	.01
4T	.21	.37	.30	.17	-.38
5T	.46	.09	.03	.28	.40
6T	.40	.08	.43	.19	-.10
7T	.25	.18	.14	.45	-.08
8T	.52	.06	-.04	.01	.33
9T	.04	.16	.61	.13	.03
10T	.10	.66	.26	.09	-.22
11T	.04	.07	.17	-.07	.63
12T	.40	.08	.51	.26	-.17
13T	-.03	.06	.67	.03	.16
14T	.04	.01	.78	.07	.16
15T	.44	.25	.32	-.09	.01
16T	.55	.21	.08	-.14	.21
1P	.54	.10	.02	.08	-.16
2P	.73	.01	.01	.16	-.08
3P	.56	.04	.25	.09	-.24
4P	.30	.21	.35	.00	-.53
5P	.65	.03	.17	.27	.15
6P	.48	.01	.52	.09	-.16
7P	.50	.06	.23	.18	-.33
8P	.65	.07	.04	.01	.14
9P	.24	.12	.62	-.05	-.20
10P	.29	.18	.45	.00	-.37
11P	.00	.03	.21	-.04	.66
12P	.47	.07	.41	.22	-.21
13P	.00	.04	.70	.00	.16
14P	.19	.03	.73	.04	.09
15P	.54	.12	.41	-.14	-.16
16P	.63	.13	.23	-.17	.14

Table 1 cont.

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
1E	-.11	.24	.12	.65	.03
2E	.08	.16	.05	.55	.13
3E	.31	.15	-.23	.59	.24
4E	.07	.15	.00	.57	.19
1PE	.29	.04	.25	.53	-.37
2PE	.29	.02	.27	.55	-.17
3PE	.48	-.01	-.05	.62	.04
4PE	.15	.00	.10	.63	-.19
Eigenvalue	11.94	4.98	4.20	3.13	2.70
PCT of Var.	21.3	8.9	7.5	5.6	4.8

Appendix A
Counselor Role Inventory

Counselor Role Inventory

For each item please respond three times. The first if you perceive this function as part of the ideal role of the school counselor. The second if this is typical of your present role as a school counselor and the third to your perception of how your building principal perceives your role.

1=not descriptive 2=somewhat descriptive 3=undecided
4=descriptive 5=very descriptive

<u>It is the counselor's function:</u>

1. To provide classroom groups with structured activities to promote career awareness, self concept and social development.

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ideal	Typical	Principal

2. To provide counselor led group interventions as an integral part of appropriate curriculum areas in the school.

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ideal	Typical	Principal

3. To provide small group counseling when needed for students with more serious problems.

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ideal	Typical	Principal

4. To counsel individually with students when more attention or privacy is needed.

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ideal	Typical	Principal

5. To provide in-service training to help teachers increase communication skills, improve the quality of interactions with students, and become more sensitive to students' developmental needs.

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ideal	Typical	Principal

6. To consult with school staff in the process of identification, remediation, and referral of children for special services.

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ideal	Typical	Principal

7. To consult with individual parents where improvement of family communication skills, strategies for encouraging learning, and better understanding of student growth and development are needed.

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ideal	Typical	Principal

8. To provide a program of life-skills education for parents to assist them in improving family communication skills and understanding student growth and development.

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ideal	Typical	Principal

9. To be readily available to all students for individual assistance with personal understanding, use of opportunities, and understanding of the impact of educational choices on one's life-style and career development.

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ideal	Typical	Principal

10. To keep information resulting from the counseling relationship confidential in accordance with the student's rights and the counselor's professional obligations.

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ideal	Typical	Principal

11. To provide assistance in areas such as student attendance, discipline, and substitute teaching as needed.

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ideal	Typical	Principal

12. To develop a close working relationship with the administrator and provide professional assistance so that appropriate planning, implementation, and

evaluation occur relative to the guidance and counseling needs of students.

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ideal	Typical	Principal

13. To provide assistance in areas considered part of the counselor's responsibilities such as documentation, student records, reporting, correspondence, and paper work.

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ideal	Typical	Principal

14. To provide assistance in the area of student educational placements which includes pupil assignment to teachers or programs, student scheduling, and placement changes.

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ideal	Typical	Principal

15. To maintain an ongoing set of liaison relationships with various individuals and agencies to coordinate programs and services on behalf of students in the school and those in transition status between school and some other institution.

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ideal	Typical	Principal

16. To foster the development and improvement of the profession by assisting with appropriate research and participating professional association activities at the local state, or national levels.

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ideal	Typical	Principal

Effectiveness can be defined as proficiency in producing a desired outcome. Please respond twice to each item. The first time to how effective you feel and the second to

your perception of how your principal would perceive your effectiveness.

1=not effective 2=somewhat effective 3=undecided
4=effective 5=very effective

1. Providing help in the counseling relationship to individual students in their process of growth and development.

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Counselor	Principal

2. Providing professional assistance to teachers and administrators in dealing with the growth and development of students.

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Counselor	Principal

3. Providing developmental guidance experiences through groups (including classrooms).

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Counselor	Principal

4. Providing teachers, administrators, and parents with an awareness of the services and professional assistance available from the counselor.

1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Counselor	Principal

PLEASE ADD ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS